

My experience with the Michigan Department of Education concerning the way they investigated my complaint concerning my sons in the Livonia Public School District was nothing short of shameful.

I filed complaints against the Livonia Public School District concerning both my sons, Marc and Daniel Flaherty. The MDE assigned a case number but split the two with only an A and B reference to distinguish between the two. This made it very difficult for Charles Achterhof to keep track of which complaint for which child we were discussing on our clarifying call. This particular call had Mr. Achterhof refusing to even consider investigating my complaint over the use of the district's policy of adjourning an IEP simply for the inability to change dates in the MISTAR system. This resulted in another clarifying call with Harmonee Saunto who said the MDE would indeed be able to investigate my complaint.

The final decision for case C-7680-13-A was made on September 26, 2013 and stated a corrective action plan would be mailed under separate cover within 5 business days. The MDE claimed to have a receipt showing I had signed for this on Oct. 2nd. What I had received was a "corrected" decision document whereas the MDE changed its mind on two complaints and changed them from compliant to non-complaint and vice versa. Neither I nor the Livonia Public School District were sent any corrective action for this complaint.

My advocate, Marcie Lipsitt and I were together for another meeting when I expressed concern over this. We emailed Sheryl Diamond our concerns, my questions, and our knowledge of how Steve Taylor, the Coordinator of Student Services, hadn't received anything either. Her response was one I read in utter disbelief. She accused me of signing a document that I had no knowledge of, no input, and was not the originator of. She threatened she would not tolerate

any "misinformation" on these complaints. I felt bullied. I am a taxpayer and should not be treated with such disrespect by Ms. Diamond. My response to her accusations went unanswered, as so many of my emails have.

I filed another complaint against the MDE this time for not providing myself or the Livonia Public School District with a corrective action plan on case number C-7680-13-A. I had made a Freedom of Information Act request from the MDE and had correspondence from Kathy Donagrandi, Director of Special Education Services, indicating by February 12, 2014 the district was still waiting. Harmonee Saunto was kind enough to send Ms. Donagrandi a copy of the Corrective Action and Proof of Compliance. I had to receive mine through a FOIA request.

My clarifying call for this complaint was held with Ron Griener. He was persistent in the fact a registered receipt was signed by LPS and myself on October 9th of 2013. This is factual, but the corrective action and proof of compliance wasn't included. After much debate and reading to him where the error occurred in the cover letter that was sent stating everything was included but wasn't, he said it wouldn't matter anyway as the MDE didn't have to investigate this if it didn't want to. And of course, that is exactly what happened, they decided they would not investigate my complaint.

I have to ask is this how the MDE is supposed to work. Are complaints supposed to be dismissed without a second thought? Are parents supposed to be bullied and intimidated throughout the process? I am hoping you say the answers to this is no.

I am dismayed and discouraged by my experiences with the Michigan Department of Education as a parent and a taxpayer. I wonder when this department shifted from one that

treated parents and advocates with respect and focused on the educational needs of the students to one that is working against parents and advocates, is rude and dismissive and supports districts and ISDs at all costs.

The MDE has no elected oversight. This department does not operate with transparency and the elected State Board of Education has no oversight power. We live in America where we believe in elected authority and democracy. This is not the case for my children, for me and my husband or anyone vested in the education of our State's students with IEPs.

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